

HURRICANE MITCH RECONSTRUCTION UPDATE



USAID/Nicaragua Hurricane Mitch Reconstruction Program

(U.S. Millions of Dollars)	\$103.6
Public Health	30.6
Economic Reactivation	53.5
Disaster Mitigation	6.6
Education	4.5
Municipal Infrastructure	2.9
Transparency and Accountability	1.0
Food Aid	4.5



Departments of Nicaragua
Affected by Hurricane Mitch

IMPROVING HEALTH WITH WATER SYSTEMS AND LATRINES

El Porvenir, Nicaragua—This poor community, haphazardly constructed over an old railway line 12 years ago, never had much in the way of basic services, lacking both electricity and health and sanitation facilities. The situation worsened when Hurricane Mitch flooded the humble dwellings and contaminated the two rustic wells that supplied drinking water to the population.

So it was with a big celebration, complete with music, dancing and performing clowns, that the community inaugurated, on July 12, 2001, the 24 new wells and 31 latrines built with funding from USAID.

“We are so thankful for this project,” said Maria Isabel Cordoba. “We don’t have to drink contaminated water and there is less sickness and diarrhea.” And teenager Maritza Cruz couldn’t be happier with her family’s new well. “I can bathe as many times a



A group of girls in El Porvenir have a drink of water before going to the inauguration celebrating the community’s new wells and latrines.

day as I want,” said Maritza. Bathing, or drinking water before meant walking two blocks to a damaged, uncovered community well and hauling water home in buckets and barrels.

The \$24,152 spent on the construction of the wells and latrines in El Porvenir, located in the north-western department of Chinandega, is part of a \$9.5 million USAID water and sanitation program through the Environmental Health Project (EHP). The USAID/EHP activities are designed to improve the health of families in Mitch-affected communities by repairing or building new rural water systems and latrines. A total of 2,441 wells and more than 5,700 latrines have been repaired and constructed since the program began. For USAID, the training and education of the population in good health practices is just as important as the wells

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The community of Teresa Diaz inaugurated 110 new latrines and 110 wells financed by USAID.

IMPROVING HEALTH...

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and latrines. The USAID Environmental Health Project has provided over 10,000 community and household training visits since the start of the program.

Residents in El Porvenir actively participated in the project with each family actually helping to build their latrine and water system. Save the Children, a U.S. private volunteer organization implementing the USAID project, helped organize a Potable Water Committee in the community to assume the leadership in the project activities. Residents were taught how to build latrines and wells and attended workshops in health and hygiene.

Danelia Cruz, a 40-year-old grandmother, said the well and latrine have made a big difference in her life. It is easier to clean and wash clothes and the health of her family of six has improved. And, says Cruz, she learned masonry skills. "I made the latrine myself."

The same day that the residents of El Porvenir were celebrating, the Teresa Diaz community also inaugurated new latrines and wells financed by the USAID/EHP program. Plan International, a U.S. private volunteer organization, was USAID's implementing partner for the construction of 110 new latrines and the rehabilitation of 110 wells. The \$107,700 project in Teresa Diaz also distributed 110 household water filters and held workshops on developing healthy habits.

Marta Azucena Padilla notices the difference in the health of her family since the new latrine was built



Danelia Cruz, a 40-year-old grandmother helped build the family's well. But the new latrine she built herself.

and the well on the property was improved.

"The old well did not have a top and it was always filled with debris," said Padilla. "We have much healthier conditions now."

This community of 555 people also has a Potable Water Committee that is setting up plant nurseries for reforestation of the community. Residents are also organized and trained in natural disaster mitigation and emergency procedures.

In both communities the committees have been key in promoting participation by all residents and boosting the concept of self-help to insure that community improvement will continue even after the project finishes.

El Porvenir is already planning how to improve the poor housing conditions of the community.

"We are not asking anyone to give us houses," said Leonor Estrada a community leader. "We can build our own houses because now we know how."



Marta Azucena Padilla with her daughter Juana in front of the family's new latrine in the community of Teresa Diaz.

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USAID Nicaragua
De la Rotonda
Centroamerica,
400 metros abajo
Managua, Nicaragua
Tel: (505) 267-0502
Fax: (505) 278-3828
<http://www.usaid.org.ni>